

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

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AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

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SUMMARY

EMBASSY SEES MERIT IN CONTINUATION AT THIS TIME OF AIFLD/CARIBBEAN PROGRAM AT CURRENT MODEST LEVELS. OWING TO POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES IN THIS POLITICALLY DIVERSE AREA, WE MAINTAIN VIEW THAT AIFLD AND US INTEREST WILL BE BEST SERVED IF AIFLD PURSUES LIMITED AND WELL DEFINED OBJECTIVES.
END SUMMARY.

1. PRIMARY OBJECTIVES FOR FY 74/75 AND FORESEEABLE FUTURE SHOULD BE (1) TRAINING UNION OFFICIALS AT VARIOUS LEVELS IN TECHNIQUES OF ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT; (2) ASSISTING LOCAL UNIONS AND CCL TO DEVELOP THEIR OWN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FINANCED FROM THEIR OWN RESOURCES; (3) IMPROVING CCL'S ABILITY TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL SERVICES TO ITS AFFILIATES; AND (4) HELPING LOCAL UNIONS MEET ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS THROUGH APPROPRIATE USE OF IMPACT (RRLF) PROJECTS.

2. WE REGARD DEVELOPMENT OF FREE AND DEMOCRATIC LABOR

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ORGANIZATIONS AS INTEGRAL PART OF CARIBBEAN ECONOMIC AND

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. UNIONS PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT POTENTIAL FOR ORDERLY POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL SYSTEM AND FOR GUARANTEEING WORKING MASSES FAIR SHARE IN REGION'S ECONOMIC GROWTH. PRESENTLY MOST LOCAL UNION ARE ORGANIZATIONALY AND FINANCIALLY WEAK AND THEIR LEADERS LACK REQUIRED TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS TO ADEQUATELY REPRESENT AND SERVE THEIR MEMBERS. (MOST NOTABLE EXCEPTION IS BARBADOS WORKERS UNION.) IN MOST CASES AIFLD REPRESENTS ONE OF FEW SOURCES OF OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE TO DEMOCRATICALLY ORIENTED LABOR ORGANIZATIONS.

3. WHILE EMBASSY RETAINS SOME RESERVATIONS REGARDING AIFLD PROGRAM IN LIGHT OF POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES AND PECULIARITIES OF THIS REGION, WE NEVERTHELESS WOULD ADVISE AGAINST TERMINATION OF PROGRAM AT THIS JUNCTURE. LABOR ORGANIZATIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN EXERCISE DERABLE POLITICAL INFLUENCE. THEY REPRESENT AND INFLUENCE A LARGE SEGMENT OF WORKING POPULACE, ARE A TRADITIONAL BASE OF POLITICAL POWER, AND IN MANY CASES HAVE SPAWNED LEADERS OF CARIBBEAN GOVERNMENTS. AIFLD HAS TRAINED A NUMBER OF TRADE UNIONIST WHO ARE OR MAY BECOME LEADERS IN TRADE UNIONISM AND POLITICS. AIFLD PROGRAM HAS SERVED US INTERESTS BY PROVIDING A DEMOCRATIC ORIENTATION FOR LOCAL LABOR ORGANIZATIONS. IT HAS ALSO GIVEN THE EMBASSY ACCESS TO LOCAL UNIONS AND INFORMATION ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LABOR FIELD WHICH MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN LACKING.

4. WHILE SOME LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, NOTABLY BARBADOS, ANTIGUA AND ST. KITTS, HAVE WELCOMED AIFLD BECAUSE OF THEIR ALIGNMENT WITHAIFLD-ASSISTED UNIONS, WE SENSE SOME AMBIVALENCE IN ATTITUDES OF OTHER GOVERNMENTAL LEADERS DEPENDING UPON WHETHER THEY VIEW LOCAL UNIONS (AND AIFLD ASSISTANCE) AS HELPFUL OR HARMFUL TO THEIR INTERESTS. THUS FAR, HOWEVER, THERE HAVE BEEN NO DIRECT CRITICISMS OF OR ATTACKS AGAINST AIFLD IN BARBADOS OR WIAS BY LOCAL POLITICAL LEADERS SUCH AS OCCURRED LAST FALL IN TRINIDAD. WE BELIEVE IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO MINIMIZE THE RISK OF SUCH CRITICISM IF AIFLD ADHERES TO THE LIMITED OBJECTIVES OUTLINED ABOVE.

5. CCL AND AFFILIATES HAVE SHOWN CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT FOR AIFLD DURING PAST YEAR. SEVERAL RECENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY CCL

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REFLECT AFFILIATES' DESIRE TO MAINTAIN CONTACTS WITH AIFLD. DECISION TO MOVE CCL HEADQUARTERS FROM PORT OF SPAIN TO BRIDGETOWN, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS DIRECT RESPONSE TO GOT'S DECISION TO OUST AIFLD REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE OTTO SILVA. RECENT CHANGES IN CCL LEADERSHIP ALSO REFLECT, IN PART, DESIRE OF AFFILIATES TO MAKE CCL MORE EFFECTIVE CHANNEL FOR AIFLD ASSISTANCE. HAVING TAKEN THESE INITIATIVES CCL AFFILIATES WOULD NO DOUBT BE EXTREMELY DISMAYED BY SUDDEN TERMINATION OF PROGRAM.

MOREOVER, SOME (THOUGH BY NO MEANS ALL) LOCAL POLITICAL LEADERS WHO ARE AWARE OF AIFLD'S PREDOMINANTLY USG FUNDING MIGHT SEIZE UPON TERMINATION OF PROGRAM AS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF USG'S NEGLECT AND DISREGARD FOR ITS CARIBBEAN NEIGHBORS.

6. AS PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED, AIFLD REPRESENTS ONE OF FEW SOURCES OF OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE TO LABOR MOVEMENT. IT APPEARS, HOWEVER, THAT THE ANTI-U.S. LATIN AMERICAN REGIONAL TRADE ORGANIZATION, CLAT, WHICH IS ALREADY ASSISTING SOME NON-CCL AFFILIATED UNIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN, IS ATTEMPTING TO EXPAND ITS INFLUENCE. IN AIFLD'S ABSENCE, UNIONS PRESENTLY AFFILIATED WITH CCL MIGHT TURN TO CLAT FOR TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE THEY SEEK, A DEVELOPMENT WHICH BOTH US AND LOCAL POLITICAL LEADERS MIGHT REASONABLY VIEW WITH CONCERN.

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